

# Broadband for All Resolution of 2020

Reps. Deb Haaland (NM-01) & Ro Khanna (CA-17)

---

**The Problem.** Access to reliable high-speed internet is a necessity to function in modern society and participate in America's democratic process, but many families in the United States lack access to high-speed broadband internet creating a measurable digital divide in this country. Severe inequalities exist when it comes to people of color, low-income earners, and those living in rural areas or on Tribal lands. Lack of high-speed internet keeps many from access to teleworking, completing homework assignments, receiving telemedicine services, economic development, and basic rights like freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and participation in democracy.

**The Solution.** The *Broadband for All Resolution of 2020* works to reaffirm basic civil and human rights protections so all people — especially low-income households, people of color, and those living in rural areas or on Tribal lands — can access reliable broadband internet for basic daily activities. This resolution is critical to promote fair, equal, and impartial treatment of all people to access digital services regardless of their race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion and economic status. The resolution affirms basic civil and human rights which are hindered without access to dependable digital networks, so that no one is left behind in the digital divide regardless of where they live or their income level.

**Background.** The UN Human Rights Council also passed a [2016 resolution](#), supported by 70 countries, further calling on countries to bridge the digital divide. It raised global awareness that internet is not only a luxury, but a necessity that must be protected to defend freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and basic global human rights standards since technology has become a modern global necessity. This has become a staple human rights globally, as [internet blackouts have encumbered the ability of people to peacefully assemble and hampered efforts to bring transparency to crackdowns on protests](#) in democratic countries across the world.

Currently, 22.3 percent of people living in rural areas still lack access to broadband internet, compared to only 1.5 percent of those who live in urban locations. In 2020, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services further found that more than 1 in 6 people with incomes below the Federal poverty level had no internet access. And, only 65 percent of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians living on Tribal lands have access to broadband services today.

## Specifically, the Broadband for All Resolution of 2020:

- Recognizes equal access to broadband internet for all Americans as a civil and human right.
- Asserts that access to broadband internet enables participation in the democratic process, equal access to information and education, government services, freedom of expression, freedom to peacefully assemble, and other civil liberties.
- Recognizes access to broadband internet protects exercise of constitutionally vested rights and equal engagement in American democratic process.
- Acknowledges that limiting access broadband internet is a human rights violation, only to be withheld, limited, or restricted through narrowly tailored laws.
- Calls on the President of the United States to:
  - Build upon balanced technological leadership in the Federal Government and provide funding opportunities for all Americans to have equal access to broadband internet, especially for people of color, low-income families, and those living in rural or remote areas.
  - Increase opportunities for infrastructure development for those left behind in the digital divide.
  - Protect sovereignty rights and treaty obligations by ensuring Tribes have full and permanent access to electromagnetic spectrum over their lands to deploy broadband internet services.